

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

Categorical Exclusion

**DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2014-0250-CX
Paleontology Excavation in Coyote Basin, UT**

PREPARING OFFICE

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management



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Prepared by
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Chapter 1. Categorical Exclusion

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A. Background

DOI-BLM-UT-G010–2014–0250–CX

Paleo excavation in Coyote Basin, UT

BLM Office: Vernal Field Office, 170 South 500 East, Vernal, UT

Lease/Serial/Case File No.:

Proposed Action Title/Type: Excavation of paleontology fossils in Coyote Basin

Location of Proposed Action: Two locations: T8S R18E, SE/4 SW/4 Sec 28 and T9S R21E NE/4 SW/4 of Sec 30

Description of Proposed Action: Steve Sroka with the Utah Field House of Natural History State Park Museum in Vernal, UT is applying for a permit to excavate some fossils found by SWCA. SWCA found some scientifically important fossils near but outside the paleontology survey areas for two different well pads. Both areas have been mapped as the Wagonhound Member of the Uinta Formation (Uinta B). The two sites are located on BLM land and both are near existing roads. Less than three square meters will be disturbed at each site.

At the first location, the fossils are located between the road and the bluff as one approaches the well pad from the west. Continued heavy rains pose a threat to the specimens, as they are exposed on flats where water continues to run over them.

The second site is located in the Anadarko field associated with the NBU 921–30 well pad. This site is near the flat area southeast of the well pad.

Preparation and curation will need to be completed on collected blocks in the new Preparation lab at the Utah Field House. It is paramount that excavation be allowed to recover material known to be still in the ground, as the material could be ruined given its geographic position.

Hand tools or small mechanical equipment (generator with hammer drill/jackhammer) can accomplish removal of overburden. Heavy equipment such as a backhoe is not expected to be needed to reach the potential specimens. Standard paleontological techniques will be used in the collection of the material. The proposed work sequence is outlined below and is similar to what has been done under other BLM permits granted to the applicant.

Proposed Work Sequence:

1. Coordination with the Utah Field House and Bureau of Land Management personnel as well as appropriate volunteers before excavation of the quarry begins.
2. Preliminary work meeting; possibly on site.
3. Excavation and removal of specimens, particularly for those already exposed.
4. Use hand tools or small power tools to remove overburden and surrounding matrix.
5. Provide annual report.

6. Back filling Quarry areas and recontouring the hill will be done on completion of the project, which is undeterminate at this time.
7. Final report on fossils collected at completion of the project.
8. Copies of any professional publications regarding this site and its fossils will be supplied to all organizational participants.

Equipment to be used:

1. Small portable generator-Honda EU200i (AC 2000 Watts, 120V max output).
2. GPS.
3. Hand tools such as shovels, picks, brooms, rakes, ice picks, brushes.
4. Electric small hand tools that connect to the generator (DeWalt 1" hammer drills).
5. Plaster, Butvar glue, burlap, screens.
6. Plastic tarps (brown or green) to cover quarry area.
7. Photographic equipment for documentation of dig.

Danger is inherent in the process when rock quarry work is going on, therefore the following safety precautions are planned:

1. Supervisor, Steven Sroka, designated on the BLM permit will be on-site during all work.
2. The excavation site will be inspected daily for safety before crew begins work.
3. All personnel on site will be given safety instructions regarding the process of quarrying.
4. All personnel will wear appropriate clothing and safety gear (e.g., hats, appropriate pants, shoes, ear plugs, safety glasses).
5. Spoil will be dumped in a safe manner.
6. Equipment and personnel will access and egress along a designated route, unless another route is delineated.
7. First aid equipment will be available.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: BLM Vernal Field Office Resource Management Plan

Date Approved/Amended: October 2008

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision(s):

The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decision(s) (objectives, terms, and conditions) :

1. Locate, evaluate, and manage paleontological resources, and protect them where appropriate.
2. Facilitate suitable scientific, educational, and recreational uses of fossils.
3. Ensure that significant fossils are not inadvertently damaged, destroyed, or removed from public ownership is a result of surface disturbance or land exchanges.
4. Foster public awareness and appreciation of the area's paleontological heritage.

PAL-3 (Page 106) of the RMP states “ Fossils collected under a permit remain the property of the federal government and must be placed in a suitable repository (such as a museum or university) identified at the time of permit issuance.”

PAL-6 (Page 106) of the RMP states “ Where scientifically significant fossils are threatened by natural hazards or unauthorized collection, the BLM will work with permittees and other partners to salvage specimens and reduce future threats to resources at risk”

C. Compliance with NEPA:

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 2, Appendix 1, 1.6 Nondestructive data collection.

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because the project sites are small (less than 3 square meters each) and there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 2 apply.

I considered the proposed action, and all the extraordinary circumstances as documented in the attached worksheet.

D. Approval and Contact Information

/s/ Jerry Kenczka

10/01/2014

Jerry Kenczka
Assistant Vernal Field Office Manager, Lands and Minerals

Date